

V. Lyrics, Story, and Form

1. musicians are not poets

poets often avoid obvious rhythm

musicians do the opposite

musicians:

- repeat phrases
- establish patterns
- use shorter lines
- rely heavily on rhythm

poets excel at:

- imagery
- metaphor
- rhetorical devices

we can borrow these tools

key idea:

lyrics are closer to music than poetry

2. rhyme is more flexible than most people think

perfect rhymes are only one possibility

examples:

- lies / eyes
- shake / hate
- tell / tall
- lend / ending

don't rely only on perfect rhymes

imperfect rhymes often sound more natural

key idea:

sound matters more than technical perfection

3. rhyme schemes create expectations

basic schemes include:

couplets

AA

alternating

ABAB

enclosed

ABBA

creates delayed resolution

tail rhyme

AABCCB

or

AABAAB

key idea:

rhyme creates structure and expectation

4. study poetic forms as training

examples:

- common meter
- in memoriam
- ottava rima

- romance stanza
- blank verse
- terza rima
- sonnets
- haiku

purpose:

not imitation

but ear training

eventually you stop counting

you simply hear the forms

key idea:

forms educate the ear

5. stories follow arcs

every story contains:

setup

introduces the situation

development

things change

conflict appears

resolution

tension is released

movies work this way

songs work this way

key idea:

emotion comes from movement

6. tension should increase through the song

many songs follow a large-scale arc

example:

A B A B C B B

the bridge creates the highest tension

the final choruses provide release

even repeated sections create tension through:

- lyric changes
- melodic variation
- instrumentation
- arrangement

key idea:

repetition does not mean stagnation

7. every verse should move the story

too many songs have a third verse with nothing new

better approach:

verse 1

establish the situation

verse 2

introduce change

verse 3

increase the consequences

something should always move forward

key idea:

every section should contribute

8. songs are snapshots

songs don't tell stories like movies

they show moments

the listener fills in the gaps

each snapshot should be:

- clear
- meaningful
- different from the previous one

key idea:

clarity matters more than detail

9. repetitive music needs variation

repetition creates familiarity

variation prevents boredom

variation can come from:

- lyrics
- melody
- harmony
- rhythm
- instrumentation
- dynamics

key idea:

identity and variation must coexist

10. verses are active, choruses are abstract

verses usually describe:

- events
- actions
- situations

choruses express:

- feelings
- themes
- big ideas

the chorus gives emotional meaning to the verses

key idea:

verses explain

choruses summarize emotionally

11. changing context changes meaning

the same chorus can mean different things

depending on what happened in the verse

later verses may completely change how the listener interprets the chorus

key idea:

context creates meaning

12. instrumental music tells stories too

people often assume vocals create emotion

but movies demonstrate otherwise

many emotional scenes rely mostly on instrumental music

instrumental music allows listeners to imagine their own stories

key idea:

words are not required for emotional communication

13. asking questions creates insight

questions are powerful

examples:

- why do some people prefer instrumentals?
- why do certain songs move us more?
- why does one story feel stronger than another?

simply asking these questions often leads to discoveries

key idea:

curiosity creates understanding

bottom line

this section is really saying:

- musicians use rhythm differently from poets
- rhyme creates expectation
- forms train the ear
- stories depend on setup, development, and resolution
- songs should increase tension over time
- every verse should move something forward
- repetition requires variation
- verses tend to be concrete while choruses are abstract
- meaning changes with context

- instrumental music can tell stories just as powerfully as words

and most importantly:

songs are not collections of lyrics

they are emotional journeys